

Set a smart example.
Sooner or later, kids
will do as you do.

A photograph of an adult's hand holding a banana, with a child's hand following its lead. The background is a solid blue gradient. The text 'meals are a great time to play FOLLOW-THE-LEADER' is overlaid in a blue, outlined font. A thin blue line extends from the bottom of the text down to the bottom of the page.

meals are a great time
to play FOLLOW-THE-LEADER

and you're the leader

how a mother's devotion led to a healthy family [AND LOWERED THE WEEKLY GROCERY BILL!]

"I grew up in a large family—eleven people in all. With eight brothers and sisters my parents had to be economical. Meals were always filling yet thrifty foods like spaghetti, and lots of it. Once in a while my mother would add a can of vegetables to the meal but we rarely ate fresh fruits or vegetables.

My son's pediatrician told me that eating habits are set by age five. That shocked me. I realized I had a huge responsibility. I wanted my child to learn healthy eating habits early so he would have them throughout his life.

I had never considered myself to have particularly healthy eating habits, but practically overnight I started buying and eating healthier foods. Sure, I could have served these foods to my son and continued eating candy and other old favorites. But I knew I couldn't keep this game up forever, and it just seemed easier to learn to like what I wanted my child to eat. Besides, not only did I want to set a good example, I wanted to stay healthy for my son, too.

Now most of what I buy is vegetables and fruit, yet remarkably my weekly grocery bill is less than my friends' bills. I don't buy the more expensive organic produce or produce that is out of season. We don't keep a lot of unhealthy snacks around either. And we don't depend on fast-food meals.

Others are amazed at how my children eat. Avocado is always a big hit. The older children scoop it out of the shell with a spoon—the perfect 30 second snack. Salads are a favorite too when drizzled with a light touch of ranch dressing. Tomato slices are devoured when sprinkled with cheese and a little olive oil and vinegar.

It's been a great investment: five years of healthy eating for a lifetime of not just healthy habits but healthy living. I never guessed I would also receive the extra bonus of learning to like healthy foods myself. I'm so proud of the way my children eat—and I'm proud of myself, too."

Virginia's Tips for Healthy Eating Habits (and keeping the grocery bill down):

- Set a good example by adopting healthy eating habits yourself.
- Offer a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Resist fast food meals and meals that depend on huge servings of meat.
- Offer healthy meals to your children and let them decide how much is enough.



Arizona Department of Health Services

Bureau of USDA Nutrition Programs
150 N. 18th Avenue, Suite 310
Phoenix, AZ 85007
1-800-2525-WIC
www.azwic.gov

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